

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 IO-10 ACDA-05 AF-06 /087 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0110

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY LISBON

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AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

AMCONSUL LYON

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, FR, PGOV

SUBJECT: PORTUGAL AND PUBLIC LIBERTY -- MATERIAL FOR
FRENCH POLITICAL QUARRELS

REF: (A) PARIS 14263; (B) PARIS 14385

SUMMARY. FRENCH POLITICAL EXPRESSION HEATED UP THIS
PAST WEEKEND WITH A MAZE OF CONFLICTING STATEMENTS
BASED ON RECENT PORTUGUESE EVENTS. PRIME MINISTER
CHIRAC CALLED THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCF) ENEMIES
OF LIBERTY AND CASTIGATED THE PCF FOR ITS SUPPORT OF
THE PORTUGUESE COMMUNISTS (PCP). FRANCOIS MITTERRAND,
FIRST SECRETARY OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) MADE A
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STRONG STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE EMBATTLED DIRECTORS

OF LISBON NEWSPAPER REPUBLICA. IN RETURN GEORGES MARCHAIS, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PCF, SAID HE WAS "SURPRISED AND ANXIOUS" ABOUT THE SOCIALIST POSITION, AND WENT ON TO WONDER IN A FRONT PAGE HUMANITE EDITORIAL IF THE PS REALLY WANTED A UNION OF THE LEFT SUMMIT MEETING. THIS SUDDEN FLARE-UP IN FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS HAS ANTECEDENTS IN THE APPROACHING GAULLIST (UDR) NATIONAL CONVENTION JUNE 15-16, PS DESIRES TO GIVE UNAMBIGUOUS SUPPORT TO CIVIL LIBERTIES AND THE IMPORTANCE FOR THE PCF OF MAINTAINING A CREDIBLE DISTANCE FROM ITS SOCIALIST ALLIES WHILE SHOWING ALLEGIANCE TO THE PCP. THE QUARRELS CAN BE EXPECTED TO BENEFIT MAINLY THE GOVERNMENT MAJORITY. END SUMMARY.

1. MITTERRAND AND THE REPUBLICA AFFAIR. ON MAY 29, THE PS WEEKLY L'UNITE PUBLISHED ARTICLES CONDEMNING PCF SUPPORT FOR PCP ATTACKS ON PORTUGUESE LIBERTIES. THE PS CRITICISM STRESSED THE IRONY OF THE PCF'S POSITION: THE VERY LIBERTIES WHICH IT HAD PROPOSED TO THE FRENCH PEOPLE LAST WEEK (REF A) ARE NOW THE OBJECTS OF AN ATTACK IN PORTUGAL WHICH THE PCF REFUSES TO CONDEMN. SEVERAL PS STAFFERS AND WELL-PLACED JOURNALISTS HAVE SINCE TOLD EMBASSY THAT MITTERRAND SUPPORT FOR THE REPUBLICA AND FOR THE PORTUGUESE SOCIALISTS (PSP) IS THE RESULT OF THREE FACTORS:

- MITTERRAND'S PERSONAL AFFECTION AND RESPECT FOR SOARES AND THE KIND OF SOCIALISM HE ESPOUSES;
- MITTERRAND'S DESIRE TO STRESS AGAIN THE EXTENT TO WHICH SOUTHERN EUROPEAN SOCIALISM CAN AND MUST FOLLOW A PATH OF COOPERATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY SERVING AS A PROTECTOR OF DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM AND CIVIL
- PS DESIRES TO CLEARLY MARK FOR FRENCH VOTERS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PS AND PCF ATTITUDES TOWARDS CIVIL LIBERTIES.

2. THE PCF COUNTER ATTACK: THE PCF, CAUGHT BETWEEN AN OVERT ATTACK FROM CHIRAC (SEE BELOW) AND ITS FEARS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF BEING OUTDISTANCED BY THE PS, WASTED NO TIME IN CALLING CHIRAC "TOTALITARIAN AND FASCISTIC" (THEREBY RECALLING THE RHETORIC OF THE ANTI-COMMUNIST CAMPAIGN HEADED LAST FALL BY MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR MICHEL PONIATOWSKI). AFTER ACCUSING CHIRAC OF SYSTEMATIC ANTI-COMMUNISM AND A GENERAL ANTI-WORKER CAMPAIGN, THE PCF TURNED ITS ATTENTIONS TO THE PS. A SHARPLY CUTTING FRONT-PAGE EDITORIAL IN THE PARTY NEWSPAPER HUMANITE

JUNE 2 ALLOWED MARCHAIS TO ACCUSE THE PS OF LAUNCHING
A VIOLENTLY ANTI-PCF ATTACK "BY TAKING AS A PRETEXT OUR
ATTITUDE WITH RESPECT TO A CONFLICT TAKING PLACE IN A
NEWSPAPER IN LISBON." WITH VARIOUS SLAPS AT THE
SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL'S POSITION AND AT MARIO SOARES
(WHOM MARCHAIS CALLED A "TRAVELLING SALESMAN OF
DIVISION") AND A BRIEF SKETCH OF PCF'S EFFORTS AT

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LEFT UNITY, MARCHAIS CONCLUDED THAT THERE IS REASON TO
ASK IF THE PS REALLY WANTS THE UNION OF THE LEFT SUMMIT
MEETING WHICH IT HAD PROPOSED AT THE BEGINNING OF MAY.

3. CHIRAC SPEAKS OUT: PRIME MINISTER JACQUES CHIRAC (SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UDR) SPENT LAST WEEKEND RALLYING THE UDR PROVINCES AND ATTACKING THE COMMUNISTS FOR THEIR "ASSASSINATION OF LIBERTIES IN PORTUGAL." FIRMLY LINKING THE PCF TO PCP ATTEMPTS TO SHUT DOWN THE NEWSPAPER REPUBLICA, CHIRAC ACCUSED THE PCF OF BEING AGAINST TRADITIONAL FRENCH LIBERTIES. IN A USEFUL BIT OF POLITICAL RHETORIC CHIRAC WENT ON TO CLAIM THAT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PCF AND THE UDR IS DEVOTION TO "OUR GAULLIST HERITAGE" OF LIBERTY.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENT: FOR THE MOMENT, THE NEW POLITICAL QUARREL SERVES THE INTERNAL INTERESTS OF ALL SIDES. CHIRAC CAN GO TO HIS PARTY'S NATIONAL ASSISTANCE WRAPPED IN THE LEGITIMACY OF BOTH HIS STRONG ANTI-COMMUNISM AND, BY INFERENCE, THE OPEN HAND WHICH HE HAS EXTENDED TO THE SOCIALISTS BY NOT ATTACKING THEM DIRECTLY. MARCHAIS AND MITTERRAND HAVE ONCE MORE PLAYED TO THEIR RESPECTIVE AUDIENCES. BOTH OF THE MAJOR LEFT PARTIES KNOW THAT THEY HAVE LITTLE INFLUENCE ON EVENTS IN PORTUGAL; THEIR QUARREL OVER THE REPUBLICA AFFAIR IS DESIGNED TO CONVINCE THEIR OWN RANK AND FILE THAT EACH PARTY IS TAKING A POSITION CONSONANT WITH ITS INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS; NEITHER PARTY WILL THUS APPEAR TO HAVE SACRIFICED PRINCIPLE FOR UNITY. BUT THE BIG WINNER IN THESE DISPUTES SEEMS SURE TO BE THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY WHICH CONTINUES TO APPEAR AS A STABLE AND RELATIVELY FORWARD LOOKING ELEMENT IN A WORLD OF FACTIONAL POLITICS ON THE LEFT -- WHICH CAN ONLY REMIND VOTERS OF THE LEFT'S IMPOTENCE DURING THE FOURTH REPUBLIC. RUSH

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